

# WEIGH IN ON THE WINNEBAGO WATERWAYS

*A Coordinated Public Engagement Effort for  
the Lake Winnebago System*



## Final Report

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Prepared for: Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways  
Project Steering Team

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*Photo credits: MindMixer Users jC14 and RonH9.*

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**Lake Winnebago and its neighboring waterways are big. But being big can lead to big problems.** Aggressive invasive species like zebra mussels and some plants can choke out the diverse range of plants and animals that feed the sturgeon, walleye and other game fish that anglers seek. Quality trails, parks and water sports opportunities are integral to tourism and maintaining quality of life in the region. Stormwater pollution from nearby cities and farms contribute to ugly, and sometimes toxic, algae. Boat ramps have to be maintained and buoys have to be replaced. Water levels have to be managed to promote boating, but also to allow fish and animals the conditions they need to thrive.

The Steering Team wanted to know which of these issues, or others, the public finds most pressing, and which should be managed from a more coordinated approach. During the public outreach period, we heard that water quality is of concern to most people who participated, but the perception of quality is largely based on geography and how people are using the system. Water quality is most often associated with water clarity, even though biologically, clarity does not necessarily indicate a healthy ecosystem.

#### Commonly Reported Issues Facing the Winnebago Waterways

Algae Blooms  
Polluted Runoff  
Invasive Species  
Excessive Plants/Vegetation in Waterways  
Phosphorus and Sediment  
Erosion and Wetland Loss  
Water Levels Management

Lack of Unified Permit System  
Inconsistent Policies across Counties  
Enforcement of Existing Regulations  
Improving Parks & Trails  
Lack of Business Variety  
Lack of Boater Education  
Fishing Regulations

While feedback showed that **all** of these issues are not only important, but very much connected, three main issues stood out and were consistently noted at the public meetings, on surveys and on the website. **These TOP THREE issues are as connected to water quality as the Winnebago Waterways are connected to each other.**

### ALGAE BLOOMS

Although feelings about algae blooms differed slightly depending on where participants live, without question this was one of the top three issues noted through the public input process. Respondents noted that algae blooms impact drinking water, hinder recreation and are the result of *many* sources of pollution, such as chemicals or fertilizers in runoff, high levels of phosphorus in the waterways, direct polluted discharges and dirty water coming from roads and private property.



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### POLLUTED RUNOFF

Feedback from participants around the entire Winnebago system shows that polluted runoff, from various sources, is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Respondents noted the need for native landscaping on shoreline properties, best management practices for lawn care (such as composting, rain barrels and eliminating fertilizers), buffers on agricultural properties and better enforcement of guidelines for sewage systems and stormwater management. Polluted runoff leads to many problems for the health of the waterways that can ultimately hinder recreational uses which, in turn, affect the region's economy and industry.

## INVASIVE SPECIES

Lake Winnebago is a recognized Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Source Water, and the public has clearly noticed the effects of invasive species in the Winnebago Waterways. Many people specifically reported zebra mussels as a major nuisance when their shells accumulate on shorelines and beaches, though many believe the zebra mussels contribute to improved water clarity. While zebra mussels were most commonly discussed in the feedback forums, the spread of all invasive species was noted as a major issue. Education and outreach are seen by participants as the best way to prevent the spread of existing and introduction of new species, though some felt that providing more resources at boat landings, such as water for cleaning boats, better signage and better enforcement, would be effective.



CREDIT: MindMixer User David B86

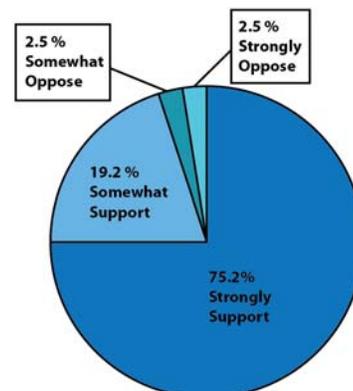
An overwhelming 95% of survey takers support agencies and local municipalities working together to manage the system.

**Many Issues to Consider!** While algae, polluted runoff and invasive species were the three issues that bubbled to the top, the public did raise a broad range of issues, and consistently mentioned issues related to boating and communities. Boating-related issues included a desire for consistent or unified launch permits, safety education, law enforcement, and facilities. Community issues included park amenities, trails connections, more diverse businesses, events and tourism.

**Like the communities that surround the Winnebago Waterways, these issues are interconnected. The solutions are too.** Decades of planning documents have suggested that the waterways system be managed cooperatively. While this recommendation is generally well received, this is the first true effort to get all the right agencies and organizations at the same table to explore the right strategy or structure. Since the best plans and initiatives rely on support from the stakeholders they serve, the Steering Team went straight to that source to determine whether cooperative management is something they want. An overwhelming 95% of survey takers, along with extremely positive feedback at public meetings and the online forum, showed that people support agencies and local municipalities working together to manage the system. People who were hesitant to answer or to fully support this idea noted that they would prefer to know exactly what the management structure looks like before they could vote.

**What happens next?** The Steering Team plans to use the information and input gathered from this public engagement exercise to inform future phases of the project. The Steering Team will continue to work together on next steps, such as:

- **Communicate Consistently with the Public**  
The Steering Team should continue to clearly communicate with the public about project status, any issues currently being addressed, and how they plan to address other priorities. This may require a targeted messaging campaign to inform the public that their input was heard, and that certain issues and solutions are currently being addressed. A campaign name (Weigh in



**Survey question results:** "Would you SUPPORT or OPPOSE more formal collaboration among the existing government agencies for management of the issues affecting the Winnebago System?"

on the Winnebago Waterways) is in place, giving the project initial recognition throughout the five counties, and a communications structure has been built. The Steering Team should review, and revise accordingly, the pathways of communications in place to ensure targeted audiences are included and continue to be reached.

- **Engage Local Municipalities**

The Steering Team should engage with local municipalities immediately. The public is currently engaged and momentum was strong at the time this report was written. The Steering Team has a timely opportunity to research collaboration efforts and to discuss project opportunities with local jurisdictions. Together, these jurisdictions should try to identify redundancies in code, policy or permitting, and areas where waterways management coordination can be enhanced. The results of this study can also help local governments see the areas where they could improve communication, access to information, outreach and education to clarify or correct misperceptions about lake issues and management responsibilities.

- **Engage Community Representatives**

The Steering Team should also begin a planning effort to engage local, private and nonprofit champions on the next project phases. Consider the enthusiasm and participation of the Stakeholder Advisory Team and continue to engage those members and their networks.

- **Define Cooperative Management**

Now that public support for cooperative management has been noted, the Steering Team must define exactly what that means or *could* mean. The Steering Team should research potential management areas approaches that have been used for large, multi-jurisdictional, public resources, and determine how they might apply to the Winnebago Waterways and gauge public support for such options accordingly.

- **Conduct Public Polling About Solutions and Funding Structure**

Public input indicates that most people feel that education, outreach and monitoring activities would be a good starting point for working together. The Steering Team would benefit from additional polling of the public on more specific ways in which to work cooperatively. Further, the Steering Team should also research potential funding sources and structure(s) for implementing cooperative management, then conduct further public polling to determine support for the options.

- **Consider and Respond to Public Opinions and Ideas**

The Steering Team should consider the comments and all of the priorities identified through the public engagement process and conduct an analysis of any issues that are already being addressed, as well as which issues and solutions are less intensive and could be addressed in the immediate or near future. The Steering Team should consider, specifically, researching or developing better coordinated education, outreach and monitoring programs. Such activities would have multiple benefits, including engaging the public in new ways and providing a role for more organizations and individuals. The monitoring activity could also provide more information with which to measure conditions and trends on the lakes. In addition, now that the public has expressed concerns, they will want to hear back from decision-makers about progress. Since some of their identified



To maintain the public engagement momentum of Phase I and respect the public's efforts recent efforts, engagement must be continually promoted through the next phases.

concerns are already being addressed, this is a great opportunity for decision-makers to showcase progress. The Steering Team should determine whether additional data points or public input are needed to be able to address the priority issues. For example, this phase collected information about the addresses and age of participants that could be used to address under-represented communities and groups (e.g. people ages 14-35 make up about one-third of the population in the region, but were only about 12% of the participants).

- **Continue and Strengthen Steering Team and Assign Roles**

The Steering Team should continue to meet at least once per month to keep project momentum going, continue assigning roles and maintain a chart of progress; Biodiversity Project recommends maintaining a neutral facilitator to assist with documentation and keeping the process democratic and transparent. The Steering Team currently consists of 25 members, 19 of whom were consistently active throughout Phase I by attending monthly meetings and conference calls, providing input and feedback, participating in outreach efforts and promoting projects. Biodiversity Project recommends further solidifying the Steering Team going forward, and assigning specific roles to all members to ensure progress is documented and communication is consistent among the team.

- **Develop Communications and Outreach Strategy**

Biodiversity Project recommends that, once next steps for the project are defined, the Steering Team commission appropriate messaging and outreach planning. Transitioning the public message to reflect new progress will be important as project evolves to ensure all stakeholders are appropriately informed along the way.

**Active Steering Team Members**

- **Kim Biedermann:** Winnebago County UW-Extension
- **Chad Casper:** Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation
- **Chad Cook:** Winnebago County UW-Extension
- **Terri Dopp-Paukstat:** Waushara County
- **Eric Fowle:** East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
- **Erin Gerred:** Fond du Lac County
- **Ted Johnson:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- **Kendall Kamke:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- **Michael Lizotte:** Winnebago Lakes Council
- **Rob McLennan:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- **Craig Moser:** Outagamie County
- **Catherine Neiswender:** Winnebago County UW-Extension
- **Danielle Santry:** Calumet County
- **Diane Schauer:** Calumet County
- **Julie Schmelzer:** Calumet County
- **Jay Shambeau:** Calumet County
- **Sam Tobias:** Fond du Lac County
- **Diana Tscheschlok:** Fond du Lac County UW-Extension
- **Todd Verboomen:** East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

## II. Background and Project Understanding

Lake Winnebago and its associated waterways provide a major asset to their surrounding region in Wisconsin. The Winnebago system serves 522,000 people in a five county area with high quality angling and hunting, recreational water use, drinking water and economic opportunity. The five counties – Calumet, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, Waushara and Winnebago – are working together to identify and address ways to maintain these assets in a comprehensive and cohesive way.

On behalf of this five county coordinated effort, Calumet County sponsored and was awarded two Large Scale Planning Grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to begin a major planning effort for the Lake Winnebago system. The overall goal of this multi-phase project is to define the best solutions to developing and implementing a coordinated, economically sustainable and long-term management approach to the Winnebago system. The current grant awards supported the first phase of this project; Phase 1 included a significant public engagement effort, establishing an inventory of existing data and planning resources, and starting to prioritize issues for action.

Over several decades, various agencies, departments and organizations have developed plans and strategies for addressing the many economic and environmental issues facing the Lake Winnebago system. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has made significant efforts to address such issues via their fisheries program or by means of the Winnebago Comprehensive Management Plan. Further, a substantial amount of planning and implementation work has been accomplished by the various County Land and Water Conservation Departments. Other county departments, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations have also worked to address environmental and water quality issues, but these efforts have not been coordinated throughout the system, and often only serve a distinct geographic or issue area.

**The size and complexity of the Lake Winnebago system makes managing it very difficult, often crossing political, jurisdictional, and watershed boundaries. This interconnection between boundary lines is an inherent indication of a real need to assess and improve how this system is managed for water quality, recreation, and economic opportunities.**

### *Ecosystem and Assets*

The Winnebago system contributes tremendous resources to the entire State of Wisconsin; these are vital to the immediate counties that serve and are served by this system. The region depends on a healthy lake system not only to maintain a healthy economy, but also to provide drinking water to over 200,000 people. Lake Winnebago itself is a complex and highly important ecosystem: a total of 81 species of fish have been identified, with the largest viable population of lake sturgeon in the world. Further, the system is used heavily by recreational boaters and swimmers. The Lake boasts national recognition as a top windsurfing location, and several public swimming areas offer outdoor enthusiasts more than just swimming as the beaches lend access to playground areas, hiking trails, and education centers.

#### **Did You Know That Lake Winnebago...**

- Is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest inland lake in the United States?
- Provides drinking water to over 200,000 people?
- Is home to 81 fish species?

A 2007 report revealed the economic impact of angling on the Lake Winnebago system accounted for \$234 million annually and 4,300 jobs. To protect that economic engine, proper management of the entire ecosystem – from aquatic plant management to fisheries protection – is necessary. Proper management cannot happen through individual efforts – it is important to ensure that all of the regulatory and management agencies work together and implement a consistent approach. Further, coordination among the area economic development corporations and organizations around the Lake system could help attract new business – for example among the angling and boating related industries – and help existing

businesses expand operations. This economic example could be applied to many other regional industries as well.

### *Threats and Solutions*

The Lake system, despite being a major asset to the region, faces threats to its long-term viability from the very uses it serves. Water quality issues can make boating or swimming less attractive and can harm fish populations. For example, Lake Winnebago is recognized as a Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Source Water, and volunteers often report deposits of zebra mussel shells at public swim areas. Other invasive species like Eurasian milfoil, curly leaf pondweed, rusty crayfish and carp are also found in Lake Winnebago. A common approach to addressing these invasions and preventing future invasions is vital to sustaining the Lake system long term.

As regulations or programs affecting the environment or economy go into effect, each county or management agency must address the required changes. A cohesive approach would ensure programs are implemented and enforced consistently throughout the Lake to provide maximum benefit to the environment and economy, to avoid duplication of services, and to maximize efficiency of financial and human capital. Due to the number of jurisdictions within the system, coordinated efforts historically have been challenging, therefore a management strategy can guide better coordination and avoid duplication. Future phases of this project will research and analyze potential management structures that could benefit the Lake Winnebago system. The first step, however, was to engage the public and various stakeholders to understand how they are using the waterways, and identify what they feel are the priority issues that are affecting the Lake Winnebago system.

### III. Project Approach

Over the years, numerous plans have been completed throughout the five-county region. These plans identified goals and objectives for the Lake Winnebago system, several of which are noted in Section IV. This project is rooted in the recommendations from many of those plans, which have stressed the need to provide a coordinated, long-term, comprehensive management approach to address issues of multi-jurisdictional concern to local stakeholders. This project aims to achieve some of the following goals:

*Goal No. 1:* Enhance knowledge and understanding of Lake Winnebago's fish, plant, and aquatic life and their habitats.

Objectives:

1. Catalog existing inventories and create new inventories where none exist for the fish, plants, aquatic life and their habitats.
2. Work with technical experts and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive assessment of fish, plants, aquatic life and their habitats, as well as provide management recommendations (e.g. shoreland restoration plans, plant management plans).
3. Coordinate with the WDNR to determine if any areas in and adjacent to the Lake deserve WDNR Sensitive Area Designation, shoreland restoration, and/or protection programs.
4. Inventory those threatened, rare or endangered species to ensure their habitat is not destroyed.

*Goal No. 2:* Gain a better understanding of the social, environmental and political factors that affect the holistic management of Lake Winnebago.

Objectives:

1. Evaluate all existing plans and studies concerning Lake Winnebago.
2. Compile existing data from the many counties involved that analyzes the point and non-point sources for water pollution that are impairing the waters.
3. Review current programs and mandates impacting levels of cooperation and coordination.
4. Assess how Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), adaptive management, pollutant trading, nutrient management and other water quality tools can best be utilized to aid in improving Lake Winnebago's water quality.

*Goal No. 3:* Ensure maximum stakeholder involvement in inventory, plan development and management conversations, impaired water action plan discussions, and prioritization of Lake issues.

Objectives:

1. Encourage stakeholder involvement in Lake discussions to be certain all stakeholder groups' interests are well represented.
2. Provide a multitude of avenues for stakeholder engagement by means of surveys, focus groups, informational meetings, and web/electronic communication.
3. Maintain a website so stakeholders are aware of participation opportunities, progress and outcomes.
4. Inventory an accurate representation of the critical issues facing Lake Winnebago.

#### *Method and Approach*

Phase I of this project focuses on Goals 2 and 3 above. Generally, the project team is applying the objectives to accomplish these goals by: a) collecting and gathering inventories, plans and data; and b) developing and implementing a public and stakeholder engagement strategy.

### A. Information Gathering

The project team worked together to identify and locate as many existing plans and data as possible that have been developed and collected regarding the Lake Winnebago system. Further details of this exercise are discussed in Section IV, but the general purpose was to note priorities or recommendations that have been previously identified, and to establish an inventory of currently available data. Fifty-five plans or reports have been collected, along with over 20 data sets.

### B. Communications and Media Strategy

The project team developed a communications and media strategy to ensure efforts to solicit input were successful. A communications strategy motivates a target audience to take some action or change their behavior. In this case, the targeted behavior was participation in the public engagement process (discussed below and in Section VI) by taking surveys, participating in an online forum, and attending public meetings.

### C. Public Engagement

The project team hired Biodiversity Project to implement a multi-faceted approach to obtaining stakeholder and public audience feedback, which included an online engagement forum, a traditional survey (distributed both online and in hard copy formats), and traditional public meeting facilitation, to ensure reach to and feedback from a broad and far reaching group. A communications strategy and messaging were developed to broaden outreach to its fullest. A partnership with MindMixer, an online community forum, was used to develop effective and interactive survey tools efficiently. Providing this suite of options yielded considerable response rates and highly valuable input.

Biodiversity Project specializes in understanding an audience and developing the right messages to reach and appeal to them. The goal of the communications strategy was to reach basically everyone with a stake in how the Winnebago system is managed; in an effort to extend the reach, several stakeholder groups were identified, and issues were grouped into six general categories:

- Angling/Hunting
- Water Quality
- Recreational Water Use
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Management Approaches
- Political Issues

To better define the target audiences the project team was trying to reach, they identified broad groups of stakeholders:

Winnebago System Stakeholder Categories	Stakeholder Sub-Groups (if applicable)
<b>Fishing/fishing guides</b>	
<b>Hunting/conservation community</b>	
<b>Real estate related community</b>	Property owners Lake associations Beach associations Real estate agents Builders
<b>Farmers/Agricultural community</b>	
<b>Boaters/Marinas</b>	
<b>Municipalities</b>	Municipal staff Utilities Law enforcement departments County Executives/Administrators

Winnebago System Stakeholder Categories	Stakeholder Sub-Groups (if applicable)
<b>Economic development community</b>	Industry (water uses) Economic Development Corporations Tourism Convention and Visitor Bureaus Festivals/Events Lake dependent businesses Experimental Aircraft Association Lake service providers
<b>Water quality advocates</b>	Trails & preserves users Friends groups Environmental and local advocacy groups NGOs
<b>Silent sports community</b>	Swimmers Non-motorized water sports State parks/land
<b>Indian Nations</b>	

A project Steering Team was established to guide the public input gathering process. Team activities included gathering information, inventories and existing plans that pertain to the lakes, which was useful for comparing how the various governments have addressed issues, identifying gaps, and meeting public expectations. This information helped the Steering Committee determine the stakeholder groups that should be recruited, and the questions that could be put into public opinion studies.

Steering Team members include representatives from each of the five counties of the Winnebago system (Calumet, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, Waushara, and Winnebago), as well as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), University of Wisconsin-Extension, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and the Winnebago Lakes Council. Further, a Stakeholder Advisory Group was recruited to ensure significant outreach to the groups identified above. The roles of these teams are outlined below.

The Steering Team consists of 25 representatives from the five county region and has guided the public input process. Participation levels from the 25 representatives varied, with a core group of 19 active members and 6 others who remained informed throughout the process, but gave little to no input. This team met two times per month from January through June 2013 – once per month via conference call and once per month at in-person at rotating locations. During the public input process, their role was to:

- Establish project goals and maintain the project’s trajectory
- Recruit Stakeholder Advisory Group members (see below)
- Assist with engagement efforts and carry out the activities identified in the Communications Strategy
- Communicate progress to County Commissioners and Executives, as well as municipal staff

Following is the list of the most active Steering Team members:

#### Active Steering Team Members

- **Kim Biedermann:** Winnebago County UW-Extension
- **Chad Casper:** Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation
- **Chad Cook:** Winnebago County UW-Extension
- **Terri Dopp-Paukstat:** Waushara County
- **Eric Fowle:** East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
- **Erin Gerred:** Fond du Lac County
- **Ted Johnson:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
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- **Sam Tobias:** Fond du Lac County
- **Diana Tscheschlok:** Fond du Lac County UW-Extension
- **Todd Verboomen:** East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

In an effort to reach all the stakeholder groups, and to ensure effective engagement of stakeholders, the Steering Team recruited a Stakeholder Advisory Team. Approximately 45 key stakeholder representatives were identified to assist the project by providing feedback and guidance on the outreach program and the public input we received. A final team of 28 agreed to volunteer their time on the Stakeholder Advisory Team. These are known active, trusted members of the region who are seen as leaders or effective conduits of information (messengers, as identified in the communications strategy). Specifically, the Stakeholder Advisory Group was asked to:

- Test drive the MindMixer website and provide feedback
- Pilot the survey and provide feedback
- Attend and participate in the public meetings
- Assist with spreading the word to the public and their stakeholder groups
- Participate in an introductory conference call

In addition to the outreach efforts outlined above, Calumet County staff hosted a workshop on December 14, 2012, to engage the agricultural community in discussions regarding erosion control and runoff issues, as well as conservation measures and best practices they can employ to address such issues. The details of this workshop and its outcomes are outlined in Section IV.

## IV. Information Inventory

Throughout the course of the project, Steering Team members gathered existing resources and data about the issues affecting the Winnebago system. Further, engagement with the Calumet County agricultural community began with a workshop delivered on December 14, 2012.

### A. Planning Documents and Survey Reports

As of June 2013, the Steering Team has researched and collected 43 planning documents and 12 survey reports from within the Winnebago system (see below); further, the team has developed summaries of these data, reports and information which can be found in Appendix A. The reports and surveys cover the following topics:

- Land Use
- Regional Intergovernmental Coordination
- Water Quality
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)
- Economic Development
- Tourism
- Stormwater Management (including best management practices (BMPs))
- Sewer Service Areas (SSAs)
- Recreation and Public Access
- Public Outreach and Education
- Development (Smart Growth )
- Habitat Restoration
- Cultural and Historical Heritage

Based on the document summaries developed by representatives from Calumet County, the following common objectives and strategies have been identified among the documents.

- Protect and enhance quality of surface water, groundwater, and soils in the five county region
- Ensure consistent implementation of stormwater management and erosion control techniques
- Prevent new introduction of aquatic invasive species from human movement (via boating, fishing, construction, restoration, etc.)
- Improve and protect wildlife habitats (in-stream, riparian, wetland, and upland)
- Enhance recreational opportunities
- Develop region-wide public education resources on topics such as stormwater management (BMPs), AIS, lawn care, etc.
- Establish a system to fund environmental projects within the Lake Winnebago System
- Develop systems for long-term monitoring and evaluation

Several documents recognize the need for and recommend a coordinated management approach for the Lake Winnebago system and region. In particular, responses to the survey documents collected below highlight that residents from across the region feel a regional planning approach is a top priority for the Lake Winnebago system. The complete list of planning documents and surveys follow, listed in chronological order from most recent to oldest. Documents highlighted in green included a recommendation or otherwise prioritized establishing a coordinated management approach as an important strategy.

*Documents highlighted in green in the following chart included a recommendation or otherwise prioritized establishing a coordinated management approach as an important strategy.*

AUTHOR	REPORT/SURVEY	YEAR	NOTES
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Year 2030 Poygan SSA Plan (updated 2013)	2013	
Calumet County Resource Management Department	Calumet County Land & Water Resource Management Plan 2012-2016	2012	
Winnebago Lakes Council	Draft Winnebago Water level Fluctuation (WLF) Monitoring Network Plan	2012	
Senator Jessica King	Legislative Survey	2012	Survey question: Do you support or oppose allowing local municipalities in the Lake Winnebago watershed to coordinate their strategies to combat negative effects of runoff and invasive species while protecting fishing, recreation and tourism on our most valuable natural resource? 86% support.
Fond du Lac County and UW-Extension	Public Comments and Questions from Dip Into Lakes Seminar Series Evaluation Forms	2012	Cooperation is needed to protect the natural/water resources
	Comparison of the Lower Green Bay and Fox River Remedial Action Plan (December 2012) and the Winnebago Comprehensive Management Plan for Conformity with the Adopted Areawide Water Quality Management Plan, Fox Valley	2012	
Lake Winnebago Land & Water Conservation Association	Lake Winnebago System Resource Systems Resource Issue Survey	2011	Filed under: Survey Results, Lake Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Association, Winnebago County UW-Extension, March 2011
Winnebago County UW-Extension	Survey Results, Lake Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Association	2011	
Waushara County Land/Water and Education Committee	Waushara County Land and Water Resource Management Plan	2011	
Outagamie County Land Conservation Department	2010-2015 Outagamie County Land and Water Resource Management Plan	2010	
NEWSC	Stormwater Survey	2010	
Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department	Winnebago County 2011-2020 Land and Water Resource Management Plan	2010	
Winnebago Lakes Council, AIS Policymakers Conference	Regional Planning for Aquatic Invasive Species in the Winnebago Pool (Draft)	2010	
Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway	National Heritage Area Feasibility Study	2009	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Omro 2030 SSA Plan	2009	
Winnebago Lakes Council	Aquatic Invasive Species Strategic Plan for the Winnebago Pool Lakes	2008	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Year 2030 Regional Comprehensive Plan	2008	
UW-Extension	Current and Future Conservation Practices in the Winnebago Lake System: A Survey of Lake Butte des Morts Residents	2008	
Fond du Lac County Land and Water Conservation Department	Fond du Lac County Land & Water Resource Management Plan 2008-2012	2007	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Oshkosh 2030 SSA Plan	2007	
Winnebago County UW-Extension	The Economic Impact of Angling on the Lake Winnebago System	2006	

AUTHOR	REPORT/SURVEY	YEAR	NOTES
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Fox Cities 2030 SSA Plan (Appleton, Neenah, Menasha, GCMW, Heart of the Valley)	2006	
NEWSC	A Strategy for Stormwater Awareness and Behavior Change in Northeast Wisconsin, NEWSC Information and Education Plan	2006	
Survey Center St. Norbert College	NEWSC Stormwater Survey 2005 Final Report	2005	
WDNR Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater	Source Water Assessment for Appleton Waterworks	2005	Recommended the formation of a source water protection team composed of delegates from private parties and local, regional, state and federal organizations.
DNR/UWEX/Poygan Sportsmen's Club	Water Quality in the Lake Winnebago Pool	2004	
Josiah Garetson	Preserving Lake Winnebago, Research Paper	2004	
Oshkosh Area Community Foundation	The Environmental Quality of our Lake and Shorelines: A Community Workshop	2003	Priority #1: Form a Steering Committee to investigate the formation of a council, association, or district for the four lakes and their system.
Oshkosh Area Community Foundation	Stakeholder Summit on Lake Winnebago Issues	2003	Filed under: The Environmental Quality of our Lake and Shorelines: A Community Workshop, Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, April 2003
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Year 2030 Winneconne SSA Plan	2003	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Year 2030 Stockbridge SSA Plan	2001	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Year 2030 Fond du Lac SSA Plan	2000	
Calumet County	Stream Reclassification Stockbridge Tributary to Mud Creek and Mud Creek	2000	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Year 2030 Sherwood SSA Plan (update in progress – 2013)	2000	
WI DNR, DATCP, and Waushara and Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Departments	Nonpoint Source Control Plan for Pine River/Willow Creek Priority Watershed Project	1998	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Fox River Heritage State Parkway Concept Plan	1997	
Winnebago County Land Conservation Committee and UW-Extension	Winnebago County Water Quality Program Valuation Study	1997	
WI DNR, DATCP, and Fond du Lac and Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Departments	Nonpoint Source Control Plan for Fond du Lac River Priority Watershed Project	1997	
Center for Community Economic Development, University of Wisconsin--Extension/Madison	Winnebago System Water Quality Valuation Study	1996	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Endangered Area of the Fox River Valley in Winnebago and Green Lake Counties	1996	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	The 1993 Fur Trade Era Survey of the Fox River Corridor in N.E. Wisconsin	1994	
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Nonpoint Source Control Plan for the Lake Winnebago East Priority Watershed Project	1994	

AUTHOR	REPORT/SURVEY	YEAR	NOTES
	Survey of Fox River and Lake Winnebago Sailboaters	1993	
WI DNR, DATCP, and Outagamie and Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Departments	Nonpoint Source Control Plan for the Arrowhead River, Rat River and Daggets Creek Priority Watershed Project	1993	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Recommended Position on Water Quality Planning for Discussion with DNR Staff	1990	
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Upper Fox River Basin Water Quality Management Plan	1990	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Lower Fox River/Winnebago Pool Long-Range Plan	1989	
	Fox River-Winnebago Pool Water Quality Management Planning Options	1989	
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Winnebago Comprehensive Management Plan Federal Aid Project FW-19-P-1 Management of the Lake Winnebago System	1989	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Informational Forum Survey Report – Lower Fox River/Winnebago Pool Long-Range Plan	1988	The survey then asked if the federal government succeeds in disposing of the Fox River Project who then should handle its management. A new regional authority was the most preferred option.
Fox Valley Water Quality Planning Agency	Impacts of Best Management Practices Brothertown Creek Watershed	1982	
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Fox River Trail	1979	
Fox Valley Water Quality Planning Agency	Water Pollution Studies, Fox River Valley, Executive Summary	1978	
Fox Valley Water Quality Planning Agency	Trophic Status Winnebago Pool Lakes	1977	This document is a component of the Water Pollution Studies, Fox River Valley, Executive Summary, Fox Valley Water Quality Planning Agency, May 1978, which is summarized in this document as well.
Fox Valley Water Quality Planning Agency	Public Health Studies on the Winnebago Pool Lakes	1977	This document is a component of the Water Pollution Studies, Fox River Valley, Executive Summary, Fox River Valley Water Quality Planning Agency, May 1978, which is summarized in this document as well.
East Central Regional Planning Commission and the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Local Issues Committee	Fox Cities Area Source Water Protection Plan	Undated	
Smart Growth Plans (All recommend intergovernmental coordination.)		Various	
	Calumet County Update (original from 2007)	2012	
	Waushara County	2010	
	Outagamie County	2008	
	Winnebago County	2006	
	City of Fond du Lac (FDL County)	2005	
	Village of North Fond du Lac (FDL County)	2002	
	Town of Friendship (FDL County)	Undated	

## B. Winnebago System Data Inventory

The Steering Team has collected more than 25 data sets and maps and developed summaries for the following topic areas:

- Agriculture
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Aquatic Plant Management
- Natural Habitats
- Public Health
- Concentrated Animal Feedstock Operations (CAFOs)
- Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (WPDES)

Examples of these data include watershed codes, number and location of CAFOs, location of shoreline repair projects, boat launches and access points, WPDES permits, algae and E.coli test results, known aquatic invasive species and types and locations of wildlife habitats, among others. The summaries provide an overview of the data and identify major concerns within the topic area.

Data Inventory Topic Area	Tables	Maps	Other
<b>Agricultural Inventory</b>	System Cost Share Dollars Spent by County (2005-2012)  System Cost Share Dollars Spent by Year (2005-2012)  System Watershed Codes for Grant Project Area  System Farmer Mailing Lists  System Livestock Siting Shoreline Repair  Calumet Known Manure Storages (UF02)	Outagamie Livestock Sites	
<b>Aquatic Invasive Species Inventory</b>	System Current and Future Aquatic Invasive Species  System Boat Launches and Accesses	2010 State Nationwide Draw Tournament Pressure  2010 Tournament Pressure by Launch AIS Transportation Routes	Lake Winnebago AIS Monitoring Coordination Meeting 12.13.2012 (Draft Meeting Minutes)
<b>Aquatic Plant Management Considerations</b>	System Aquatic Plant Management Permits 2008 – 2012		Calumet Conservation Alliance Support Letter Regarding Boat Launches  LWQIA Support Press Release
<b>CAFOs &amp; WPDES Information</b>	System Wide CAFOs with Animal Units  System WPDES & Adaptive Management Eligibility		

Data Inventory Topic Area	Tables	Maps	Other
<b>Habitat Documents and Data</b>	Winnebago System Habitat Documents and Data ( <i>Detailed and nearly complete inventory of the history of aquatic plants and habitat of the Winnebago System. Due to the size, it is available as a DVD in Appendix A.</i> )		
<b>Health Considerations and Water Quality</b>	Winnebago Algae Results 06.28.2012  Winnebago <i>E. coli</i> Results 06.28.2012		WI HAB Surveillance Guidance Cell Densities ( <i>protocol</i> ) Email Regarding 06_28_2012 Ecoli & Algae Outbreak on Winnebago  Lower Fox TMDL Winnebago Considerations ( <i>planning document</i> )

### C. Watershed Workshop

On Friday December 14, 2012 Calumet County staff hosted a Lake Winnebago Watershed Meeting at the Stockbridge Community Hall. Mailed postcards invited 156 landowners and farm operators who own or rent more than 30 acres in the watershed to attend this special watershed meeting. Twenty-five people from the watershed attended the meeting and an additional three people called for more information because they were unable to attend the meeting.

The meeting agenda included four speakers from three different agencies promoting conservation practices in the watershed. The meeting began with the Calumet County Land Resources Specialist, Amanda Kleiber, from the Resource Management Department, welcoming and thanking everyone for attending. Eugene McLeod, County Conservationist, also of the Resource Management Department, discussed watershed boundaries, the impacts of runoff into Lake Winnebago, reasons why there is a special interest in the Lake Winnebago Watershed, and the benefits of installing conservation practices.

Bryce Larson, Agriculture Educator from Calumet County UW- Extension, explained the benefits of waterways, planting cover crops, buffers, and reducing the amount of tillage. Bryce discussed both the soil and fuel savings the operator could expect from practicing reduced tillage and the economics involved. He concluded by reminding the audience of the five inch rain the county received in early May 2012 and how some of the conservation practices installed on the land were able to save significant erosion and encouraged operators to be more conservation minded in the future to help with runoff in Lake Winnebago.

Amanda discussed the importance of implementing a nutrient management plan and the economic and environmental benefits of following the plan. She talked about the increase in agricultural acres in the county and need for having a plan over the past few years due to the county manure storage ordinance, and the increase in farmland preservation tax credits. She concluded by briefly explaining some of the cost share opportunities available from the county for both nutrient management and conservation practices such as barnyard runoff, waterways, etc.

Joe Smedberg, District Conservationist, from the Calumet County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), discussed the cost share opportunities available from the federal government for a wide variety of conservation practices through his agency.

Amanda and Bryce wrapped up the meeting with a group discussion asking the audience what conservation practices they have tried and what the operators' greatest challenges are in the watershed. The speakers were all present after the meeting concluded and answered individual questions.

Overall the meeting was very successful in terms of interest at the meeting and phone calls afterward. Several crop consultants have also contacted Amanda since the meeting because landowners have asked them questions when they were out working in the watershed with their clients.

The county signed a cost share contract with a landowner in the watershed to alter their manure storage facility and also hopes to work with the landowner further on a clean water diversion and a feed leachate collection in the future. The NRCS staff also received six cost share applications from landowners interested in a variety of projects including barnyard control systems, nutrient management, waterways, and small water sediment control basins.

In conclusion, the workshop inspired some very good conversations between landowners and operators in the watershed and local conservation staff regarding practices that can help control runoff into the Lake Winnebago watershed.

## V. Communications Strategy, Media & Outreach

Biodiversity Project developed a communications and media strategy for the Steering Team and Stakeholder Advisory Team to use throughout the project. The strategy serves as a roadmap that outlines the specific goal of a campaign, which behaviors must be changed to reach that goal, who needs to make those changes (the audience), and how to inspire that change (what activities and tools to use to reach the audience). In this case, the behavior targeted was to participate in the public engagement process by taking surveys, engaging in the online forum and attending public meetings. Following are the basic components of the communications and media strategy for this project.

*Goal:* Members of key public constituencies participate in a survey, an online forum and public meetings about the future of the Winnebago System. Target groups include: anglers, boaters, homeowners, business-owners, conservationists and tourism boards.

*Messengers:* A messenger is a person or organization who has access to an audience and is trusted by the audience (i.e. homeowner associations, Stakeholder Advisory Team, members of the media).

*Pathways:* The ways an audience member receives information. While audiences receive information from hundreds of pathways, not all pathways are accessible to us. Communicators have to choose the best pathway to distribute information to an audience, depending on a campaign's budget and the ultimate objective (i.e. presentations, emails).

*Activities:* For most communications campaigns, the list of activities becomes a list of materials and actions required to fully utilize the messengers and pathways. It becomes a "To Do" list based on the messages. Common activities can include: develop presentation slides, develop and print brochure or leave-behind piece, contact HOAs and schedule appointments during meetings, and give presentations. Activities are tracked so we know how many pieces were printed, presentations were given and people were in attendance.

*Media Toolkit:* Since the media was a messenger for this project, one of the activities was to develop a media toolkit. These tools were easily adaptable so each team member could use them while staying true to their own brands and systems. Media tools included: press release templates for each phase of the project, social media posts, newsletter articles, letters to the editor templates, talking points, etc.

As part of the communications strategy, Biodiversity Project also developed an appropriate message, and led the Steering Team through a process to choose a name for the project's campaign: Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways. A message is not just a slogan or tagline, but a description that states why the audience should care about an issue and what actions the audience should take to solve the problem. The message becomes the foundation for all materials and communications about the project. The final message and complete communications strategy for this project are included in Appendix B ("Communications Strategy and Message").

### A. Communications Materials

As outlined in the Activities section of the communications strategy, Biodiversity Project developed the following communications materials to be used throughout the project. The communications materials incorporated the Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways message to ensure consistent communications with the public audience. Several of these materials appeared in newspapers, newsletters, and on radio or television throughout the course of the project.

- Press releases for each stage of the project (3 total press releases)
- News advisories as needed

- Template letter to the editor to use in response to an article about the project
- Public service announcement (10 second and 30 second versions)
- Short posts to use in social media, newsletter blurbs, or event calendars
- Newsletter templates for each stage of the project
- Posters (in various sizes) to distribute or display
- Business cards to promote the website and project at in-person events
- Presentation template

#### B. Communications & Outreach Activities

From February through May 2013, Biodiversity Project, Steering Team members, and the Stakeholder Advisory Team employed a range of communications activities to engage the public in the project and gather input. Below is a summary of those activities.

- **Attend Events**

Steering Team members attended more than 40 public events and meetings in the region hosted by fishing, hunting and sports clubs, watershed councils, Village and County boards, wetland and open space organizations, business committees, and conservation groups. The Steering Team members gave presentations, hosted booths, and/or distributed project materials (poster, business cards, surveys, etc.) depending on the type of event. Biodiversity Project developed talking points and a presentation template for Steering Team members to use during events and project posters to showcase at events and/or distribute to municipalities and organizations to share in their communities.

- **Distribute Emails**

Biodiversity Project developed and distributed weekly email updates from March 7 to May 20 to a list of approximately 380 stakeholders; these emails were also sent to the Stakeholder Advisory Team with specific requests to distribute to their networks, include in newsletters and spread the word. The email updates included information about the public meetings, new topics on the website, links to press coverage, and announcements about the survey. In addition, Steering Team members developed emails based on the communications materials to distribute to their internal contacts and external listservs. Examples of email recipients include public works staff, boating and fishing clubs, sustainability groups, university professors and student groups, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and public health officials.

Through one function of the MindMixer online tool, email updates were also distributed to all registered users of the website. These MindMixer update emails announced new topics on the site ([www.WinnebagoWaterways.com](http://www.WinnebagoWaterways.com)), public meeting dates and locations, and survey opportunities.

- **Engage Social Media Outlets**

Biodiversity Project developed posts for Facebook and Twitter that Steering Team and Stakeholder Advisory Team members could share through their social media networks. These activities were mainly used by Steering Team members who are associated with a university to help engage a younger audience.

- **Distribute Printed Public Notices**

Steering Team members distributed postcards to announce the public meetings and Winnebago Waterways website. Approximately 1600 postcards were distributed for each round of public meetings in Calumet and Fond du Lac counties. Biodiversity Project distributed public meeting announcements to fishing and boating clubs in the five county region.

- **Distribute Press Release**

Steering Team members distributed press releases to their media contacts and responded to interview requests as needed. Biodiversity Project developed talking points for the Steering Team and municipal staff to use during interviews. On March 25, 2013, Calumet County and Outagamie County hosted a press conference at which Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson and Calumet County Administrator Jay Shambeau discussed the project and goal of the upcoming public meetings. The press conference helped generate media coverage for the first round of public meetings.

- **Host Public Meetings**

In addition to utilizing the website to gather input from residents, the Steering Team hosted 8 public meetings throughout the region. Biodiversity Project facilitated the meetings using interactive activities to encourage attendees to share their ideas about the top issues impacting the Winnebago Waterways and possible solutions to these issues. The first round took place on March 25, 26 and 27 and April 4; the second round took place April 29 and 30 and May 1 and 2. Members of the Steering Team and Stakeholder Advisory Team attended the meetings to help facilitate the stations and field questions about specific issues.

### *Results*

The above noted communications activities helped generate substantial coverage of the project, public meetings, website, and survey. The following page lists the known media coverage about the Winnebago Waterways project generated by the project team's outreach efforts, including newspaper articles (online and print), radio and television spots, and newsletter placements.

This coverage was instrumental in obtaining the highly valuable input from the public, further discussed in Section VI. This coverage, as well as the extensive email outreach and direct mailings, helped generate the following results:

- 370 registered users on the MindMixer site ([www.WinnebagoWaterways.com](http://www.WinnebagoWaterways.com))
- 330 paper or electronic surveys completed
- 247<sup>1</sup> public meeting attendees (per sign in sheets)

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<sup>1</sup> Official number of attendees per sign in sheets; actual number may differ as this does not account for couples who attended together but only one person signed in. Round 1 attendees = 137; Round 2 attendees = 110; 13 people attended meetings in both rounds, meaning a total of 234 unique attendees total.

<b>Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways Media Hits, March-May 2013</b>			
<b>Media Source</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Content</b>
<i>Calumet Advertiser (Calumet County)</i>	4/25/2013	Newspaper	Press release announcing public meetings
<i>Calumet Advertiser (Calumet County)</i>	5/16/2013	Newspaper	Press release announcing survey
<i>Chilton Times Journal (Chilton)</i>	4/25/2013	Newspaper	Project, website link, & public meetings
<i>Chilton Times Journal (Chilton)</i>	5/16/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>Delta Publications (New Holstein Area)</i>	3/21/2013	Newspaper	Press release announcing project
<i>Delta Publications (New Holstein Area)</i>	5/23/2013	Newspaper	Press release announcing survey
<i>Green Bay Press Gazette (Green Bay)</i>	5/13/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>Fond du Lac Reporter (Fond du Lac)</i>	3/15/2013	Newspaper	Announced project & public meetings
<i>Fond du Lac Reporter (Fond du Lac)</i>	3/25/2013	Newspaper	Reported on FDL public meeting
<i>The Northwestern Reporter (Appleton)</i>	3/25/2013	Newspaper	Project overview
<i>The Oshkosh Northwestern (Oshkosh)</i>	4/17/2013	Newspaper	Public meeting announcement
<i>The Oshkosh Northwestern (Oshkosh)</i>	5/13/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>The Post Crescent (Appleton)</i>	5/13/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>The Post Crescent (Fox Cities)</i>	5/16/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>The Scene Newspaper (Oshkosh)</i>	April 2013	Newspaper	Half page project overview
<i>Sheboygan Press (Sheboygan)</i>	3/15/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<b>Sportballa.com</b>	May 2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>Stevens Point Journal (Stevens Point)</i>	5/14/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>Times Villager (Sherwood)</i>	6/8/2013	Newspaper	Press release
<i>Wausau Daily Herald (Wausau)</i>	5/13/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<i>Wisconsin Rapids Tribune (Wisconsin Rapids)</i>	5/14/2013	Newspaper	Survey announcement
<b>ABC Channel 2 WBAY (NE Wisconsin)</b>	3/25/2013	TV	Footage from public meeting
<b>Fox Channel 11</b>	3/25/2013	TV	Project and public meeting coverage
<b>KFIZ 1150AM (Fond du Lac)</b>	3/25/2013	Radio	First round public meetings coverage
<b>NBC Channel 15 (Appleton)</b>	3/25/2013	TV	Project and public meetings coverage
<b>NBC Channel 26 (Appleton)</b>	3/26/2013	TV	Project announcement and public meetings
<b>NewsTalk 1150 WHBY (Fox Cities)</b>	5/17/2013	Radio	Project overview and survey coverage
<b>Today's TMJ4, (Appleton)</b>	3/25/2013	TV (website)	Project overview, link to <i>Post Crescent</i> article
<b>WFDL Radio (Fond du Lac)</b>	4/30/2013	Radio	Second round meetings announcement
<b>WTAQ 1360 AM (Appleton)</b>	3/25/2013	Radio	Project overview
<b>Boating on Lake Winnebago (Appleton)</b>	3/25/2013	Website	Project overview and link to <i>Oshkosh Northwestern</i> article
<b>East Central Regional Planning Commission</b>	Mar 2013	Newsletter	Project overview

<b>Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways Media Hits, March-May 2013</b>			
<b>Media Source</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Fond du Lac County</b>	5/20/2013	Website	Survey announcement
<b>UW-Extension, Fond du Lac County</b>	2/28/2013	Website	Project announcement
<b>UW-Extension, Fond du Lac County</b>	3/15/2013	Newsletter	Project overview
<b>UW-Extension, Fond du Lac County</b>	April 2013	Newsletter	Project overview
<b>UW-Extension, Fond du Lac County</b>	April 2013	Newsletter	Project overview
<b>Village of Sherwood (Sherwood)</b>		Website	Municipal talking points posted
<b>Waushara Argus (Wautoma, WI)</b>	3/13/2013	Print/ Website	Announcement of public meetings
<b>Waushara Argus (Wautoma, WI)</b>	3/20/2013	Print/ Website	General article about the project
<b>Ripon Chamber of Commerce Newsletter</b>	4/12/2013	Newsletter	Project announcement and website link
<b>Winnebago Lake Association (Fond du Lac)</b>	3/3/2013	Website	Project and meetings announcements

## VI. Public Engagement Process

Biodiversity Project implemented a multi-step program for obtaining public input that included interviewing members of the Steering Team, developing an online public engagement forum ([www.WinnebagoWaterways.com](http://www.WinnebagoWaterways.com)) and conducting a round of public meetings. The outreach activities and press coverage outlined in Section V were instrumental in engaging members of the public throughout the region to provide input for the Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways project. We used all of that input to establish priorities, as identified by the public, at another round of public meetings, through a traditional survey and via the online forum. Approximately 247 people attended the public meetings<sup>2</sup>, 370 people registered for [www.WinnebagoWaterways.com](http://www.WinnebagoWaterways.com) (341 of whom were actively<sup>3</sup> engaged), and 330 people completed the survey. While some users expressed negative feelings about the Winnebago system, water quality or other issues, they were still pleased to have the opportunity to give feedback and be engaged in the process. Whether engagement happened in-person or online, the chance to do so was generally very well received.

### A. Steering Team Expert Input

Eight members of the Steering Team volunteered to be interviewed by Biodiversity Project to discuss their particular expertise on the various topics being covered in this project. Discussion topics included:

- Angling
- Recreational Water Use
- Water Quality
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Management Approach

Each interviewed member was asked the same set of 4 questions, to be answered in the context of the issue area for which they provided input. The goal was to gain a thorough understanding of what is currently happening in the system, and to identify the starting points for developing content for the MindMixer online engagement site, as well as survey questions and structure of the public meetings.

Generally speaking, all interviewees identified the following as desired outcomes of the public engagement process:

- An understanding of what the public sees as the biggest issues affecting the Winnebago System
  - Has the public noticed changes over time (i.e. better or worse)?
  - Which issues have improved over the years, and which have not?
  - What do they see as progress?
- An understanding of who the public thinks *is currently* in charge of addressing the issues they identify
- An understanding of who the public thinks *should* be in charge of addressing the issues they identify
- Public buy-in for whatever plan or resulting actions would be going forward
- Engagement of a broader audience rather than the usual voices
- An understanding of current common and redundant management practices to help identify where to eliminate overlaps

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<sup>2</sup> Official number of attendees per sign in sheets; actual number may differ as this does not account for couples who attended together but only one person signed in. Round 1 attendees = 137; Round 2 attendees = 110; 13 people attended meetings in both rounds, meaning a total of 234 unique attendees total.

<sup>3</sup> “Active” users refer to those that registered for the website AND activated their account by clicking a link in an email from the system; other users are considered inactive, or those that registered for the site, but did not confirm their account by clicking a link in an email sent from the system.

Specifically, the Steering Team interviewees identified several important topics they felt should be teased out during the public engagement process:

- Challenges associated with conflicting recreational uses throughout the system
- Perceived detriments to good water quality and the methods they would support to improve water quality
- Knowledge about aquatic invasive species, including any practices they currently do to manage the problem; what would they be willing to do to assist with management and the need for consistent AIS monitoring throughout the system
- Current state of fisheries in the system
- Support for various economic development options (i.e. tourism vs. attracting water-dependent businesses)

#### B. Online Engagement Forum (MindMixer)

MindMixer proved to be a very important tool during the public engagement process, as it provides access for stakeholders in any location at any time while the site is live. The website “went live” at the beginning of March and remained active throughout the entire engagement phase. Forum questions pertaining to the Phase I engagement process were “closed” on May 24 to tally results for this report. The forum will remain active with new engagement questions at least through summer 2013.

MindMixer allows for more substantial feedback than a traditional survey because participants can submit their own ideas that can then be reviewed and discussed by other users. It also allows for real-time engagement and transparency in that all users can view what is being written and discussed. The Winnebago Waterways site was highly successful in attracting and keeping users engaged, no doubt a result of both the communications strategy as well as compelling issue-based content. As a further testament to the site’s success, it has been featured on MindMixer’s official site as an example of how the system can work. MindMixer has also featured the Winnebago Waterways site in their marketing efforts since the end of March.

To ensure the website remained active and engaging throughout the whole process, a variety of questions and topics were phased in approximately every two to three weeks. For the most part, topics in March and early April pertained to how people use and enjoy the waterways. They also attempted to gauge user understanding of water quality issues. From mid-April through May, questions focused on prioritizing the identified water quality issues and brainstorming potential solutions. A complete listing of the questions, polls and surveys that were conducted on the website, along with the results and user-generated content, is included in Appendix C (“MindMixer Data”).

**MindMixer demographic highlights:** The website attracted 370 people registered users, of whom 341 were active members<sup>4</sup>. The site experienced over 2,300 visits and over 23,000 page views. The website back-end technology collects demographic data of zip code, age and gender, although gender reporting is optional to the users. Of the users who reported gender, 88% were male and 12 % female; however, we do not consider this to be an accurate representation as the question was optional. Approximately 43% of users were 55 years old and above; 56% were 54 and below. The average age was 51.4 years. The most common age range was 55-64 years old (93 users), followed closely by the 45-54 range (90 users).

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<sup>4</sup>“Active” users refer to those that registered for the website AND activated their account by clicking a link in an email from the system; other users are considered inactive, or those that registered for the site, but did not confirm their account by clicking a link in an email sent from the system.

**MindMixer content highlights:** The volume of content received from the MindMixer site is significant. Website users generated over 700 comments, submitted nearly 220 unique ideas, uploaded 60 photos and participated in six instant polls and five surveys. Topics covered fishing and boating issues, water quality, recreation opportunities, tourism and business opportunities, management of the system, tracking progress over time, and potential solutions to the issues that users identified.

We were able to ask 21 questions (called “topics”) over a period of about 10 weeks where users responded with unique ideas or to multiple choice questions. The tool allowed interaction among users and the Steering Team; all users were able to expand upon each other’s ideas, answer each other’s questions and share resources. One of the great advantages of incorporating MindMixer into this project was the ability to keep the conversations flowing, as opposed to the static nature of public meetings and traditional surveys. Following are some of the highlights of the feedback received through the website.

*Polls & Surveys Results*

QUESTIONS	RESULTS
<p><b>Do you think our fisheries are world class?</b> (45 total votes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42% said: Yes, I wouldn't change a thing!</li> <li>• 56% said: Maybe, we have great fishing but I've fished better in the State</li> <li>• 2% said: No, we just don't compare to other parts of the state when it comes to fishing</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are your favorite types of fish to catch?</b></p>	<p>Walleye, perch, panfish, salmon, crappie, sturgeon, bass, bluegill</p>
<p><b>What can be done to improve fishing in the Winnebago waterways?</b></p>	<p>Better stormwater management; clean the water; lower panfish take numbers; close the season during April (while fish are spawning); control invasive species</p>
<p><b>Who currently manages the water quality in your area? (83 total votes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% = State agencies</li> <li>• 23% = County agencies</li> <li>• 7% = Regional cooperative</li> <li>• 18% = Local municipalities</li> <li>• 11% = Citizens</li> <li>• 14% = I don't know</li> <li>• 1% = Other</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who do you think SHOULD be in charge of managing the water quality? (83 total votes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20% = State agencies</li> <li>• 18% = County agencies</li> <li>• 33% = Regional cooperative</li> <li>• 13% = Local municipalities</li> <li>• 13% = Citizens</li> <li>• 1% = I don't know</li> <li>• 1% = Other</li> </ul>
<p><b>Have you noticed improvements in the water quality of the Winnebago Waterways over the years? (13 total votes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62% = Yes</li> <li>• 15% = No</li> <li>• 23% = Not sure</li> </ul>

QUESTIONS	RESULTS
<b>If yes, please tell us what you feel has improved, and when.</b>	Nine people said water clarity is improved; one said the fishery has improved over the last 6-7 years with better vegetation.
<b>What do you think has contributed to any improvements in water quality over the years?</b>	Zebra mussels contribute to the clarity; better management of private lands and runoff (though much more needs to be done)
<b>Should we promote the region beyond Wisconsin (for example, as a national or a multi-state campaign)? (30 total votes)</b>	83% = Yes; 17% = No
<b>Should we invest money in promoting the Winnebago Waterways region? (30 total votes)</b>	87% = Yes; 13% = No
<b>Who should be responsible for funding a promotional campaign?</b>	Convention and visitor bureaus; cities and tourism based industries; taxpayers; all municipalities; chambers of commerce
<b>Over the past five years, have you seen any changes in the frequency of algae blooms in the Winnebago Waterways? (97 total votes)</b>	69% - Increase; 8% = Decrease; 23% = Stayed the same
<b>Over the past five years, have you seen any changes in the severity of algae blooms in the Winnebago Waterways? (97 total votes)</b>	70% = Increase; 9% = Decrease; 21% = Stayed the same
<b>Do you think water pollution is a problem in our region? Are you concerned for your health? (100 votes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48% = Yes, water pollution is a problem and I am concerned for my health</li> <li>• 44% = Yes, water pollution is a problem but I am not concerned for my health</li> <li>• 8% = No, water pollution is not a problem</li> </ul>
<b>Which recreational opportunities do you feel are lacking in the region? (80 votes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34% = Lakefront trails (biking, hiking, etc.)</li> <li>• 21% = Silent water sports (kayaking, canoeing, etc.)</li> <li>• 18% = Public beaches/parks</li> <li>• 16% = Camping</li> <li>• 5% = Other</li> <li>• 4% = Fishing</li> <li>• 3% = Boating (motorized)</li> </ul>
<b>What is the biggest impact to water quality in our region? Select the two problems that you think our region needs to address first. (182 votes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29% = Polluted stormwater runoff from streets and residential land uses</li> <li>• 26% = Chemicals from industrial and agricultural land uses</li> <li>• 16% = Non-native plants and animals</li> <li>• 12% = Eroding shorelines and/or wetland loss</li> <li>• 9% = Lack of consistent/regional policies or guidelines for the lake system</li> <li>• 7% = Inconsistent water levels</li> <li>• 1% = Irresponsible boat/dock or shoreline maintenance</li> </ul>

QUESTIONS	RESULTS
<p><b>Which issues do you think need to be addressed first? Please select the TOP THREE. (149 Votes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21% = Polluted Runoff (From Agriculture, Roads, Residential Property, etc.)</li> <li>• 19% = Algae blooms</li> <li>• 17% = Invasive Species</li> <li>• 10% = Erosion/Wetland Loss</li> <li>• 7% = Phosphorus</li> <li>• 7% = Lack of Unified Recreational Permits (Launches, Parks, etc.)</li> <li>• 5% = Water Level Management</li> <li>• 5% = Excessive Plants/Vegetation in the waterways</li> <li>• 3% = Parks &amp; Trails Improvements</li> <li>• 2% = Fishing Regulations</li> <li>• 1% = Lack of Business Variety</li> <li>• 1% = Lack of Boater Education &amp; Enforcement</li> <li>• 1% = Other</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which types of businesses would you like to see more of in the region? (70 votes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31% = Recreation based businesses</li> <li>• 24% = Restaurants</li> <li>• 19% = Cultural amenities (museums, performing arts, etc.)</li> <li>• 11% = Water dependent industries (jet ski dealers, etc)</li> <li>• 7% = Shopping/retail</li> <li>• 7% = Other</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do you consider impacts to the waterways when maintaining your property? Do you currently use any “best management practices” on your property? Tell us which ones on the list you are currently using. (115 votes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20% = Refrain from fertilizer use</li> <li>• 19% = Composting</li> <li>• 17% = Refrain from pesticide/weed killer use</li> <li>• 17% = Landscaping with native plants</li> <li>• 11% = Rain barrels/cisterns</li> <li>• 7% = Buffer strips</li> <li>• 5% = Rain gardens</li> <li>• 2% = Other</li> </ul>

Open Ended Topic Results<sup>5</sup>

QUESTIONS	RESULTS
<p><b>Have you noticed any improvements in the water quality in our region? Where have you seen changes made, and where else would you like to see progress? What indicates to you that progress has been made?</b></p>	<p><b>12 unique ideas that generated 61 comments.</b> Discussion revolved around stormwater BMPs such as rain gardens, native vegetation and shoreline buffers; reducing nutrient runoff from farms; reducing cormorant and pelican population; runoff management from roads and residential property; and most significantly, increasing public education and outreach surrounding all these issues.</p>
<p><b>How can we stop the spread of aquatic invasive species in the Winnebago Waterways? What do you think causes the spread of AIS into and out of our waterways? How do you think we can stop it? What tools do you think would help manage the spread of AIS?</b></p>	<p><b>8 unique ideas that generated 23 comments.</b> Discussion revolved around following guidelines from DNR and utilizing resources of groups like Northeast Wisconsin Stormwater Consortium (NEWSC) and county AIS coordinators; education to aquarium owners; keeping locks closed to minimize species migration; and most significantly, addressing human movement of species through education and outreach to boaters and sportsmen.</p>
<p><b>How can we prevent the spread of invasive species both into and out of the Winnebago Waterways? We'd like to know your thoughts on how invasive species are introduced into the Winnebago Waterways. What do you think can be done to prevent new invasive species from entering the waterways? What do you think can be done to stop these invaders from spreading outside the Winnebago Waterways?</b></p>	<p><b>12 unique ideas that generated 36 comments.</b> Discussion revolved around keeping locks closed; increasing education and outreach efforts; better enforcement of current regulations regarding boat cleaning; making it easier to clean boats at landings, and keeping landings clean of weeds; and significant discussion about possibilities of finding ways to make AIS by-product useful as compost, fertilizer, etc.</p>
<p><b>Which issues do you think need more coordination among the various municipalities, agencies and jurisdictions in the region? Are there any issues that you feel are currently managed well?</b></p>	<p><b>7 unique ideas generated 19 comments.</b> Discussion revolved around stormwater management; designation of "no wake" zones; and most significantly, increasing coordinated public education and outreach efforts, with more focus on outreach to youth.</p>
<p><b>How can regional cooperation help improve the Winnebago Waterways system? What are your thoughts on regional cooperation efforts? Are there current efforts that are working well? Which aren't working well? Tell us where you think we should focus our coordinated efforts in the Winnebago Waterways system.</b></p>	<p><b>4 unique ideas generated 9 comments.</b> Discussion revolved around unifying the efforts of fishing clubs; increasing support from local boat clubs; understanding that all the issues facing the waterways are connected; and increasing regional coordination to improve water quality and set an example of working together.</p>

<sup>5</sup> Highly condensed – for full comments, please see Appendix C. NOTE: results column reflects how people **actually** responded on the website – as such, some comments do not directly relate to the questions being asked as users sometimes commented off topic.

QUESTIONS	RESULTS
<p><b>Where could access to the waterways be improved? Why does this area need improvement? What suggestions do you have for improving access?</b></p>	<p><b>11 unique ideas generated 22 comments.</b> Suggestions included: more parking at the Grundman landing; developing a boating "superpass" to be used at all landings in the 5 counties; increasing parking &amp; access at stream crossings; more handicap parking at Duck Inn; connecting High Cliff and Calumet County Park; and increasing shoreline public property.</p>
<p><b>How can our counties work together in the Winnebago region? We are always looking for good ways for our communities to work together in the region. In what ways do you think our cities, villages, towns and counties can collaborate to work toward a better tomorrow and to maintain the Winnebago Waterways for future generations?</b></p>	<p><b>16 unique ideas generated 35 comments.</b> Suggestions included: forming a committee with representatives from each county; better coordinated communication; more direct mail with messaging for AIS prevention; counties and municipalities to work together to define shoreline lots, and educate about proper stewardship/management of shoreline property; manage the system from a watershed approach; keep water quality the main focus of cooperative efforts; more and coordinated public education and outreach (on various topics); work together on developing unified boat launch permit system.</p>
<p><b>What are your favorite activities to do in the region? Tell us your favorite way to play in the Winnebago Waterways!</b></p>	<p><b>31 unique ideas generated 37 comments.</b> Most commonly reported ideas included: kids' fishing tournaments; increasing youth involvement by including sturgeon management in curricula; fishing; scenic views; adding more waterside trails; regulating the wake of large boats; and waterfowl hunting. While the following were not necessarily answering this specific question, one user submitted several ideas, including: investigating fish mortality rates after tournaments; increasing resources for and exposure of local conservation groups; studying (or reporting results of) effects of cormorants and fish populations; protecting cane beds, wood ducks and developing runoff protection plans for the rivers and feeder creeks. Further suggestions for woodshop students to make wood duck boxes that the local PTA's could auction off for fundraising, as well as conducting or making available various studies about underwater system logs, beaver control, and mapping historically bad ice areas of the system.</p>
<p><b>What makes you feel safe or unsafe when you are boating? Tell us what makes you feel safe or unsafe when boating on the Lake Winnebago waterways.</b></p>	<p><b>11 unique ideas generated 24 comments.</b> Ideas included: making sure all buoys have lights; putting a dock at all of the landings on the system; regulate and enforce speed limits to increase safety; too many people consuming alcohol while boating; regulating the wake of large pleasure watercraft; more weekend law enforcement; increase boater education as part of licensing.</p>
<p><b>What is your favorite way to play in the Winnebago region? Think about the best day(s) you spend playing in the Winnebago waterways. What's your favorite thing to do? What makes that experience great?</b></p>	<p><b>30 unique ideas with 23 comments.</b> Most commonly reported ideas included: fishing, waterskiing, boating with kids/grandchildren; fishing; hiking, wind surfing; motor biking on ice roads; hunting; swimming; relaxing/enjoying the views; visiting great parks; restaurants on the shores; kayaking; biking the shore; watching sunsets and camping.</p>

Generally, the most discussed issues on the website were runoff, from ALL sources; algae blooms; invasive species management; and better education and outreach to the public and the agriculture community about their role or impact. Many people were proud to talk about their fishing, boating, use of parks and other general recreation on the waterways; people similarly feel the region has quality park systems, though many of the facilities are in need of upgrades or maintenance. Users reported a general desire for simplified land use codes/regulations and permitting systems (mostly discussed in regard to boat launch use). Many people feel that they are personally willing to do their part in shoreline maintenance or other beneficial property management, but that they do not have the resources to do so, or the underlying ordinance or codes do not allow these activities.

In terms of recreation, tourism and business opportunities, users felt the region lacks a well connected trails system along the waterways. Many people noted a lack of public shoreline on Lake Winnebago and a lack of public access, especially in Appleton. General consensus on the website was that the region lacks diversity in businesses, and there are few shoreline restaurants with boat dock access.

Water quality was at the crux of most conversations on the website. It affects recreational use, which then affects tourism or businesses. Many comments acknowledged that the issues being discussed are very interrelated. There was great support on the website for increased coordination not only among the counties, but among all of the agencies that take part in managing the system. Further, participants suggested also including local boating and fishing clubs as well as conservation or other nonprofit organizations working on some of these issues in a coordinated effort. Significantly, the top three priority issues that users reported as needing to be addressed were: polluted runoff, algae blooms and invasive species. Out of 100 people taking a poll on the site, 92 said they felt water pollution is an issue in the Winnebago Waterways, while about half of those said they were concerned for their health because of the pollution.

### C. Public Outreach Meetings

Public meetings provide a forum to capture unique and highly valuable feedback because they allow for real-time responses to questions, which can garner project buy-in when dealing with new or contentious issues. Biodiversity Project conducted eight public meetings (two rounds of four meetings each) throughout the five-county region. The meetings were held at the following locations:

- March 25: Fond du Lac (Fond du Lac County)
- March 26: Appleton (Outagamie County)
- March 27: Town of Harrison (Calumet County)
- April 4: Oshkosh (Winnebago County)
- April 29: Menasha (Winnebago/Outagamie Counties)
- April 30: Fond du Lac (Fond du Lac County)
- May 1: Chilton (Calumet County)
- May 2: Winneconne (Winnebago/Waushara Counties)

The purpose of the first round of meetings (March 25 – April 4) was to report on information gathered as part of this project, and to obtain further input on the identified issues, as well as any issues not surfaced at that point. Parallel to the content on the MindMixer website, the second round of public meetings (April 29 – May 2) focused on confirming the priority issues that rose to the surface. The public meetings incorporated several highly interactive and engaging activities that drew out considerable meaningful input. Appendix D (“Public Meeting Outlines and Activities Results”) shows the meeting plans that Biodiversity Project developed for each round of public meetings, along with an inventory of all the comments and activity results generated at the meetings. A common theme noted throughout both rounds

of meetings is the understanding that all of these issues are inter-related, and that water quality is at the crux. Good water quality leads to recreational waterway use and tourism; thriving fisheries are signs of good water quality; and managing the waterways for water quality crosses jurisdictional boundaries.

**Public meeting demographic highlights:** Meeting participants were requested to sign in, though this was optional. Anecdotally, we can say that most attendees signed in; however, the total number of names on the sign in sheets is not the most accurate representation of final attendance since some attendees who came as couples or in groups only put one name on the sign in sheet. We can say with certainty that at least 247 people attended the eight public meetings. (Note: approximately 13 people attended multiple meetings, meaning there were 234 unique attendees.) Attendees were not required or requested to include age or gender on the sign in sheets, but anecdotally we can say that the ratio of male to female participants was approximately 70%-30%, and the average participant age was middle to late 50s.

**Public meeting content highlights, ROUND 1:** As previously mentioned, the first round of public meetings included activities aimed at identifying how people use the waterways, where they see room for improvement, perceptions of water quality and the top issues facing the waterways. While the issues were generally consistent among the four meeting locations, geography did play a part in some of the differences in opinion.

Generally speaking, the issues surrounding algae, invasive species and polluted runoff (from all sources – residential, roads, agriculture, etc.) were discussed the most often at the meetings. In Fond du Lac, runoff – particularly from agriculture – was a huge issue; in Calumet County, algae and invasive species were big issues; attendees in Outagamie were very concerned about the opening of the locks as well as invasive species and access to the waterways; and in Winnebago County, algae was the biggest issue, closely followed by runoff and invasive species.

The activities at the first round of meetings also gave participants the opportunity to highlight regional assets and identify room for improvement. These focused generally on recreation, tourism and business opportunities. Generally, the need for better facilities and public access to the waterways was cited as an area in most need of improvement; specific suggestions included: cleaner, sandy beaches, more parking and better communication about its availability, more bathrooms, and more and better access points. Swimming, hiking and biking trails and the general condition of boat launches were also noted as needing improvement. Participants also noted the need for more amenities and services along or near the waterways. Such amenities include gas stations, restaurants and docking locations, as well as more or better information about things to do or places to visit in the region. Meeting participants touted the region's fishing opportunities, fishing clubs, good boating and sailing opportunities, and quality state and county parks as great regional assets.

One overall comment made at each of the meetings was that many people often do not know who to call for information or to report issues. Several people reported that calling the area agencies rarely satisfies their need or issue.

Following is a chart with more details of the activities conducted during the first round of meetings, and the results of each.

*NOTE: Results in the chart are reported as participants actually responded; in some cases responses may not necessarily align with the question.*

ACTIVITY QUESTIONS	RESULTS/ANSWERS
<b>Tourism Opportunities - What Works Well?</b>	"Battle on Bago"; Fishing tournaments; Fishing clubs; Walleye weekend; Ice fishing; Fisheries; State and County Parks; Camping; Boating; Bird Fest; Dragonboat races
<b>Tourism Opportunities - What Needs Improvement?</b>	More public access; Lake levels; Boat access to restaurants, fuel, amenities; Need more overnight accommodations; Need more/improved marinas and launches; More duck hunting opportunities; Fishing tournament debris/nuisances; Need nicer shorelines and cleaner water
<b>Recreational Amenities - What Works Well?</b>	Sailing; Sturgeon fishing; Ice roads; Maintenance of landings; State and County Parks; Fishing; Oshkosh Riverwalk
<b>Recreational Amenities - What Needs Improvement?</b>	Launch maintenance; Lack of overnight accommodations; Too many launch permits and fees; Complicated fishing rules; Poor water quality prevents watersports; Accessibility; Lack of entertainment/amenities option for boats; Public bathroom facilities; Lack of sandy beaches; Buoy management; Lack of connected trails (bike/hike); Parking at landings
<b>Sources of Regional Pride - What Works Well?</b>	Eldorado Marsh - excellent birding; Lakeside Park (FDL); Excellent fishery; Walleye & sturgeon populations; Lower & Upper Fox and Winnebago Lakes are great assets; Windsurfing; State and County Parks; Niagara escarpment; Fishing and boating; EAA convention; Oshkosh Riverwalk
<b>Sources of Regional Pride - What Needs Improvement?</b>	Swimming beaches needed; Lakeside Park needs dredging; Access around Asylum Point; Impaired waterways; Need better events advertising; Water quality; Lack of centralized management/support (too many agencies involved); Litter at boat landings; Pioneer Park
<b>Boater Safety and Enforcement: What Works Well?</b>	USCGA vessel safety checks; safe boating classes; buoys (but need more); Water quality monitoring; Sheriffs patrolling; Winnebago County online water quality database
<b>Boater Safety and Enforcement: What Needs Improvement?</b>	Lack of enforcement; Noise from boats and motorcycles; Irresponsible boaters (alcohol consumption, excessive speeds); Inconsistent no wake zones; Algae; Conflicts b/w boaters and jet skiers
<b>What are the signs of healthy waterways?</b>	Water clarity; Vegetation; Fish populations (stable); Good fishing; Healthy weed growth; Biodiversity; Low algae; Wetlands; Stable water levels; Thriving bird populations; Recreational water use; Zebra mussels to filter the water
<b>What are the signs of unhealthy waterways?</b>	Turbidity/poor clarity; Silt, debris in runoff; Unhealthy weeds; Invasive species; Algae blooms; High phosphorus levels; Fish kills; Too many cormorants; Rough fish; Microsystis (in drinking water)

ACTIVITY QUESTIONS	RESULTS/ANSWERS
<p><b>What are ways to keep our waterways healthy (solutions)?</b></p>	<p>Big picture management of waterways; Create more wetlands &amp; retention ponds; Nutrient management; Allow breakwaters; Weed control; Regulate agriculture; Water level management; Cleaning boats/trailers; Citizen based monitoring; Education &amp; outreach; Enforce consequences; Less lawn fertilization; Regional cooperation; Shoreline buffers; Street sweeping; Remove zebra mussel shells</p>
<p><b>What is the ONE top issue facing the Winnebago Waterways?</b></p>	<p>Invasive species; weeds; algae; polluted runoff; Sediment and nutrients; climate change; Noise pollution (boats &amp; motorcycles); Permit processes; Access; Water quality; Lake flies; Point source pollution; Lack of coordination; Water clarity; Loss of wetlands; Rough fish; Lawns</p>

Two activities used maps of the waterways regions to guide discussions about water quality and different uses. Specifically, one activity asked participants to place stickers on a map to indicate areas with good water quality and areas with bad water quality. The other activity asked participants to place stickers noting favorite fishing and boating areas, areas that need improved public access, and areas they may experience conflicts with other waterways users (for example, this could indicate conflicts between speed/loud boats and fishers). The map included the full waterways system and did not allow for pinpointing addresses or very specific locations, but did allow users to indicate general locations with some accuracy. This allowed users to communicate generally where they have concerns and to indicate the areas with greatest recreational use opportunities.

The table below shows some results of the mapping exercises. Each column contains the number of star stickers placed on the maps in each county that indicate each category. To view specific locations of the stickers, please see Appendix D. Specifically, most users, regardless of location, indicated more areas with impaired water quality than with what they felt was healthy water. Fond du Lac and Winnebago attendees reported more fishing than boating spots, while Outagamie attendees tend to fish and boat equally. Calumet meeting attendees reported twice as many boating spots as fishing spots. Considering the number of fishing and boating stars that Fond du Lac and Winnebago meeting attendees placed, they reported relatively few areas of conflict with other recreational users. Conversely, Outagamie and especially Calumet meeting attendees indicated many areas of user conflicts. Generally speaking, attendees of all meeting indicated several places where access to the waterways can be improved.

MEETING LOCATION	HEALTHY WATERWAYS	UNHEALTHY WATERWAYS	FAVORITE FISHING	FAVORITE BOATING	USER CONFLICTS	IMPROVE ACCESS
<p><b>Data below indicate the total number of stars placed on the map to designate the above categories, for each county.</b></p>						
Fond du Lac	4	20	34	15	6	12
Outagamie	5	10	20	16	12	10
Calumet	6	27	9	18	12	10
Winnebago	8	21	42	20	10	13

**Public meeting content highlights, ROUND 2:** As previously mentioned, the second round of public meetings included activities aimed at prioritizing the issues that people identified at the first round of meetings and on the website, as well as trying to identify potential solutions to these problems. While algae, runoff and invasive species were mentioned the most at the first round of meetings, people also mentioned concern about safe boating practices, noise pollution from boats

and vehicles on the winter ice roads, dead fish and nuisance from fishing tournaments, control of rough fish populations, phosphorus and nutrient loads, and complex permitting issues (as pertains to both boating permits and land use and property maintenance regulations), among many others. In an attempt to prioritize some of this information to better understand which issues people feel need to be addressed first, and potentially by a cooperative approach, we developed activities to see which issues bubbled to the top, and how the public thinks they could be addressed.

The top three issues that rose to the top during these exercises were: algae blooms, polluted runoff (from all sources), and invasive species. Because invasive species and algae blooms were tied for second place, it should also be noted that excessive weeds and vegetation ranked very closely behind in the total number of votes. It is also important to note that while group discussion at the public meetings often focused on a few other issues, these three are the top three issues based on tallied survey votes. Anecdotally, in Fond du Lac, the issue of runoff specifically from agricultural sources was once again a high priority topic of discussion; in Calumet County, the layers of complex permitting systems through the state, counties, etc., was a topic of high importance; in Winnebago and Outagamie, the discussion revolved heavily around education opportunities and engaging the public in solutions; and in Winnebago and Waushara, the group discussion focused on shoreline management and nuisances from noisy and reckless boaters.

Participants at the public meetings felt that the fisheries are an example of a system that is currently being managed well. They also acknowledged that winter safety management by fishing clubs was good and, even though water levels are an issue, this was also currently being managed well. (In other words, participants do not support water level management as an activity suitable for a cooperative management approach.)

When asked which aspects need better coordinated management among the various jurisdictions, participants most commonly noted boating speeds and no wake zones, boating fees, signage and language at landings, vegetation management, trails and parks management, polluted runoff (from all sources), invasive species, algae blooms, water quality, and permitting processes (specifically regarding land use and boat launches).

One of the activities at this round of meetings asked participants to come up with solutions for each of the top issues. While each issue has its own set of solutions, there were four main activities (solutions) that rose to the top that can help address these major issues:

- Better enforcement
- Increased education & outreach
- Better coordinated policy & regulation
- Better monitoring

Participants were also asked for unique ideas for solutions, which yielded some interesting responses such as the following:

- Sanitary system checks to address polluted runoff
- Buffer shorelines with native vegetation to address polluted runoff
- Regulating large boats to help address shoreline erosion
- More localized alternatives for bank management to address erosion and vegetation management (typical lake solutions don't apply or work for Winnebago)
- Keeping the locks closed to address spread of invasive species

## D. Survey

The public engagement process is meant to be highly inclusive. Recognizing that an online forum is not all inclusive for garnering public input and that only so many people can or will attend a public meeting, we also developed a traditional survey that was distributed in paper format and via an online survey tool for convenience and to ensure broad participation. The traditional survey was made available at all public meetings, via appropriate outlets within the five-county region and through direct mailings. The survey content is included in Appendix E (“Survey Content and Results”), along with the detailed survey results and comments.

**Survey distribution and demographic highlights:** The survey was distributed through a number of channels; approximately 1,000 paper copies were distributed through direct mailings (800 copies) and at public meetings and events. From those, 156 were returned (~15.6%<sup>6</sup>). The survey was further distributed with a direct link for those interested in participating online via Survey Monkey. Emails were sent to the project stakeholder list of ~300 recipients and forwarded by the Stakeholder Advisory Team and the Steering Team. Press releases also went out and some of the press hits in May included links to the online survey; we also included a link to the survey on the MindMixer website. This yielded 174 participants taking the survey via Survey Monkey, for a grand total of 330 survey takers.

**Survey results and content highlights:** As highlighted above, the goal of the survey was to develop a further understanding of the following:

- What the public sees as the biggest issues affecting the Winnebago system
- Who the public thinks *is currently* in charge of addressing the issues they identify
- Who the public thinks *should* be in charge of addressing the issues they identify

Biodiversity Project developed a survey to capture both the above and some demographic information. Considering feedback given at the public meetings and the first several weeks on the website, a list of commonly reported issues was developed and feedback about each was requested. The following is a summary of the substantive questions relating to the issues affecting the system and how the system should be managed.

### Survey Questions 1 and 2

*“Below is a list of major issues affecting the Winnebago Waterways system that were commonly cited by residents at recent meetings and on the project website. Please select the THREE issues you think are most important to address in the near future.”* (Results below are by number of votes.)

ANSWER OPTIONS	Answer Rank	Response Count
Algae blooms (including potentially toxic forms)	1	205
Polluted runoff (from agriculture, roads and residential property)	2	177
Invasive species (aquatic)	3	157
Excessive plants/vegetation in waterways	4	71
Phosphorus and sediment	5	66
Erosion and wetland loss	6	60
Water levels management	7	42
Lack of unified permit systems (boat launches, parking, etc.)	8	35

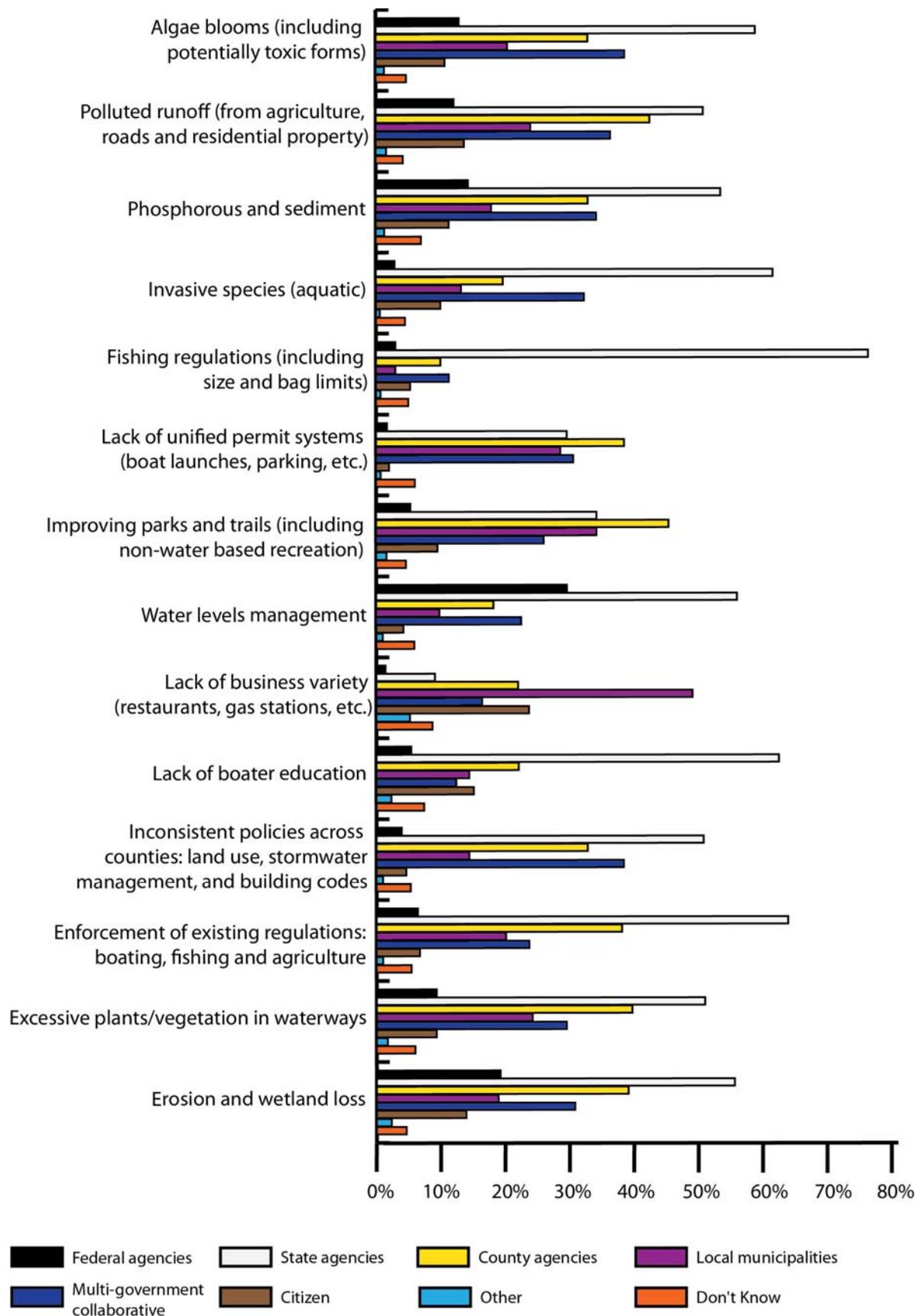
<sup>6</sup> Does not account for 34 direct mail copies returned as undeliverable by the post office; the paper survey also included a link for taking the survey online, so it is impossible to know whether any of those who received a paper copy took the survey online instead.

ANSWER OPTIONS	Answer Rank	Response Count
Inconsistent policies across counties regarding land use, stormwater management, and building codes	9	34
Enforcement of existing regulations, such as those for boating, fishing and agriculture	10	34
Improving parks and trails (including non-water based recreation)	11	31
Lack of business variety (restaurants, gas stations, etc.)	12	16
Lack of boater education	13	15
Fishing regulations (including size and bag limits)	14	11

The answers in the above chart are listed in the order by the frequency with which respondents selected that option, showing the most popular answers first. They are not listed in the order they were listed on the survey. Based on the results, the top three issues that clearly emerged as most important are algae blooms (21.5%), polluted runoff (18.6%), and invasive species (16.5%). Because participants were asked to select their top three answers, the highest percentage an option could have is 33%. In follow up to Question 1, the survey asked participants to name other major issues not already listed. While most of the 102 responses fell under one of the listed issues, a few new ideas emerged from the comments: noise levels (from boats and motorcycles), sewage and wastewater management, reckless boating, lake flies, water withdrawals and impact of agricultural practices such as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). For a full list of the responses, please see Appendix E.

*Survey Question 3*

*“Currently, the various aspects of the Winnebago Waterways system are managed separately by federal, state, county or local agencies. Who do you think should be in charge of addressing each of the issues identified in Question 1 that affect the Winnebago Waterways system? You may select more than one agency per issue.”* (Results below are listed by percentage of responders who selected that agency for that issue.)



The responses indicate that on most issues a majority of the public believes that State of Wisconsin agencies should be responsible for management. However, there was also support for county, municipal, and multi-government collaborations for managing lake issues. Generally, respondents answered that state agencies should be in charge of managing most lake issues (11 out of 14). When comparing the number of votes per issue, the top four issues that people feel should fall under state jurisdiction are fishing regulations, boater education, invasive species and water levels management.

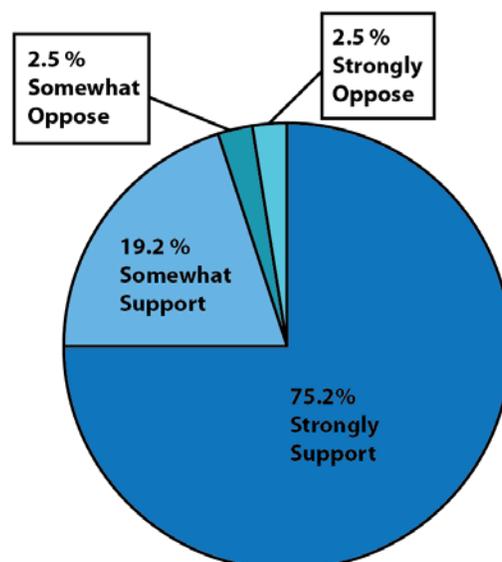
Lack of unified permit systems, improving parks and trails, and the perceived lack of business variety were not seen as a state agency responsibility. For the first two, participants selected multi-government, local municipalities, county agencies, and state agencies for each, indicating that there are a variety of understandings and expectations about who should manage these issues. Lack of business variety was mainly considered to be the responsibility of the local municipalities, as well as by citizen and county agencies.

The issues that received the highest number of votes for multi-government collaboration are algae blooms (123), inconsistent policies across counties (117) and polluted runoff (114). Although two issues received the most votes for management by county agencies (lack of unified permit system and improving parks and trails), the other agencies – state, local municipalities, and multi-government collaborative – also received significant votes, indicating that a collaborative effort might be an acceptable approach for these issues as well.

#### Survey Question 4

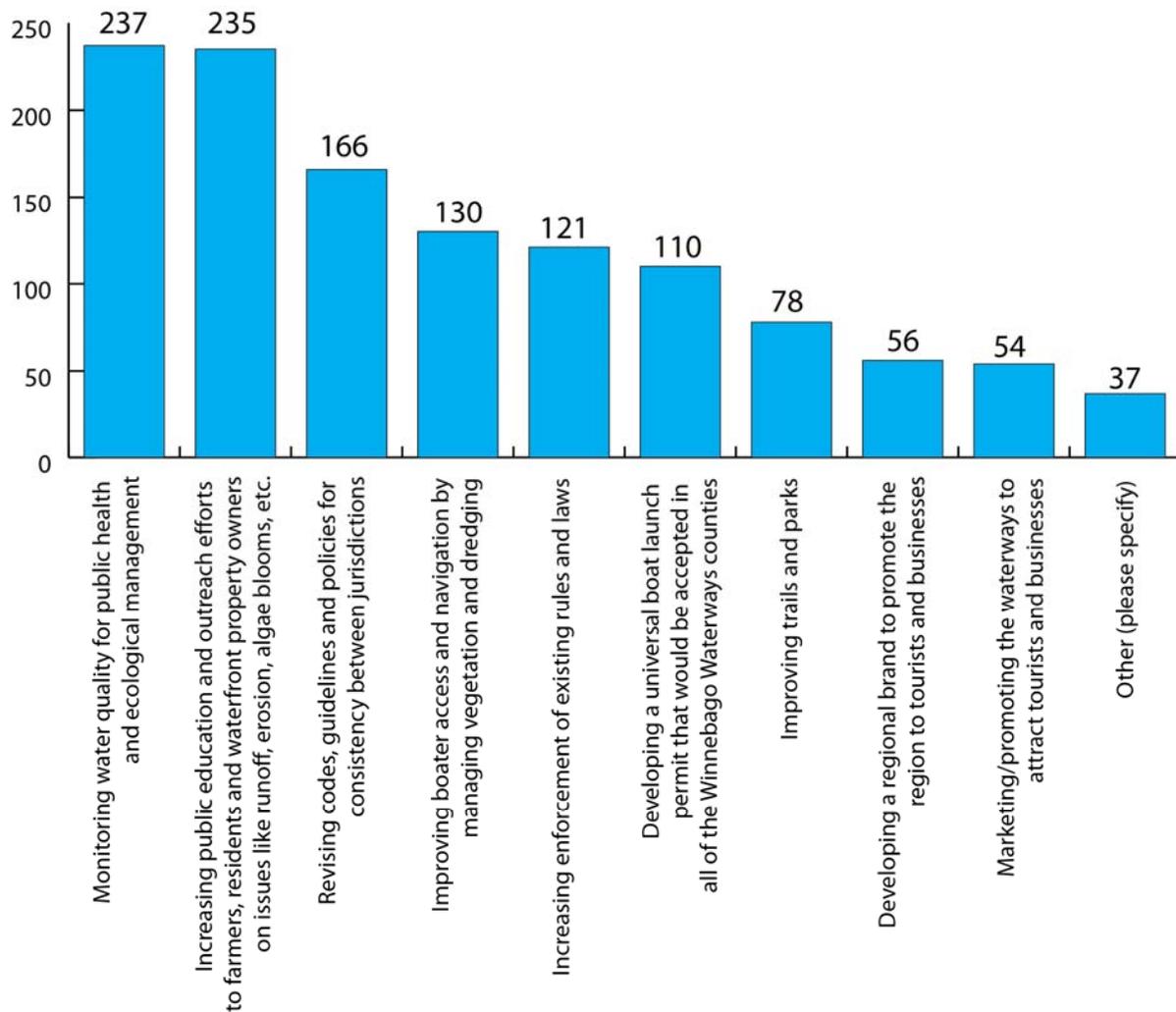
*“Currently, the various aspects of the Winnebago Waterways system are managed by federal, state, county or local agencies with little formal collaboration between agencies. Would you SUPPORT or OPPOSE more formal collaboration among the existing government agencies (local, county, state, and federal) for management of the issues affecting the Winnebago System?”*

Question 4 helped determine whether or not the public would support coordination among the various government agencies that manage the waterways. In total, 95% of respondents said they support a collaborative approach. It is notable that 75% said they would *strongly support* a collaborative effort.



*Survey Question 5:*

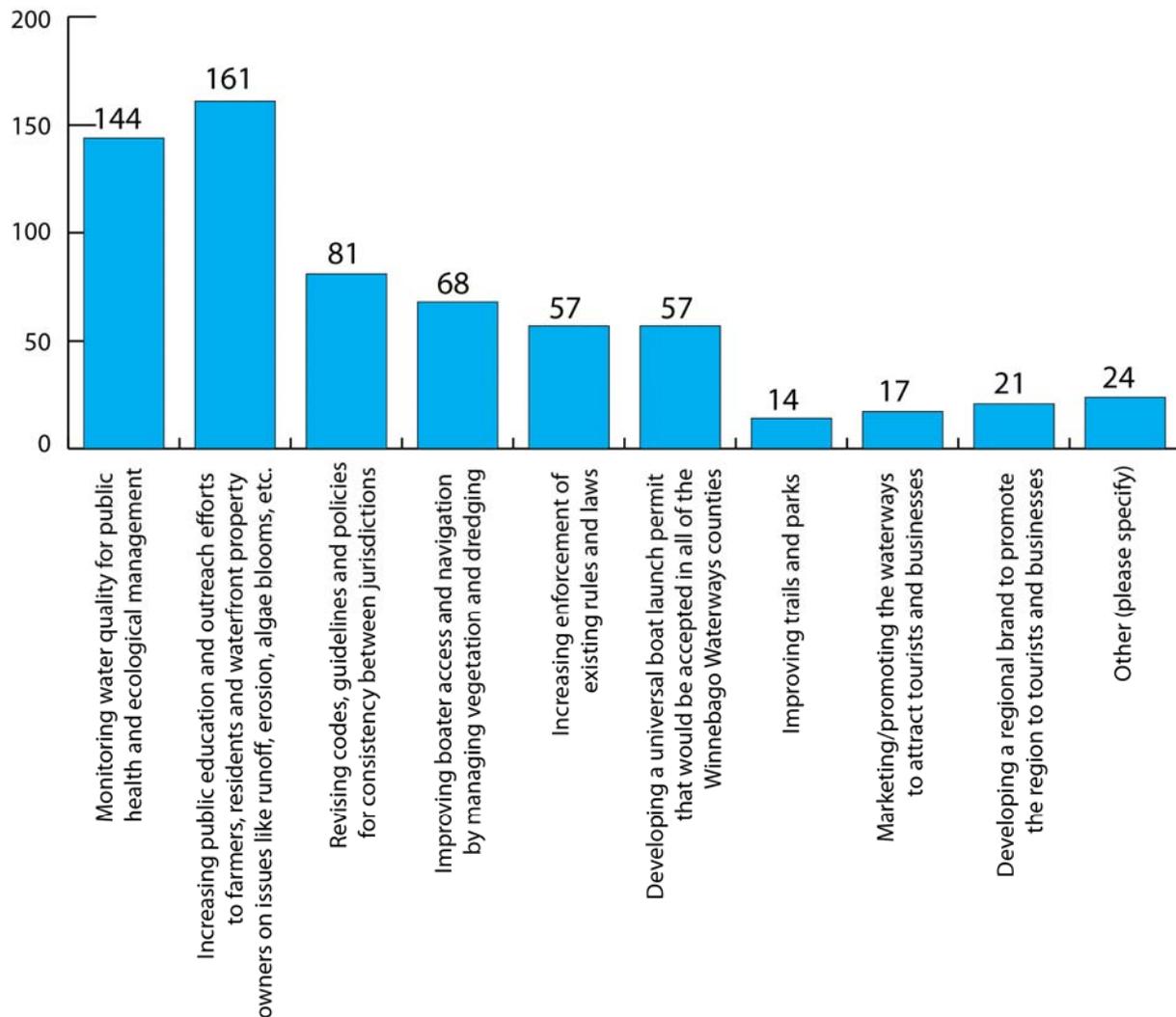
*“If the various agencies that manage the Winnebago Waterways increased their collaboration and coordination for management of the waterways, what do you think would be the BEST use of their time and resources? Select all that apply.”* (The graph below shows the total number of votes for each option.)



Question 5 helps identify all of the activities or solutions on which people would support a collaborative effort. The top three actions that emerged were monitoring water quality (237 votes, or 72.7% of voters), increasing public education and outreach (235 votes, or 72.1% of voters) and revising codes, guidelines and policies (166 votes, or 50.9% of voters). The results also imply that marketing and promoting the waterways to attract tourists and businesses and developing a regional brand to promote the region are lower priorities to address collaboratively. Relative to Question 3, the response was that the lack of business variety was largely the responsibility of the municipalities, followed by citizens and counties.

*Survey Question 6*

“Of the issues you selected above, please tell us what you think are the TOP TWO best use of their time and resources. Select two.” (The graph below shows the total number of votes for each option.)



In follow up to Question 5, this question was intended to narrow down the strategies that should be implemented using a collaborative approach, in case many strategies were favored equally. Similar to Question 5, the top two management techniques that received the most votes are increasing public education and outreach (161 votes, or 50 % of voters) and monitoring water quality (144 votes, or 44.7% of voters). These two were significantly favored over the other strategies.

Survey Questions 7 and 8 (both optional questions) allowed open-ended responses and asked about the significant resources in the Winnebago Waterways region, and how people most frequently use the waterways. Overall, the responses further emphasized the significance of fishing, boating and other water-based recreation, scenic locations, and waterfowl and wildlife hunting in this region. Other assets and resources mentioned were drinking water, hiking and trail systems, community events, and the historical significance of the region. The top ten activities identified were boating (motor), fishing, enjoying the scenic views, hunting, kayaking, canoeing, walking/hiking, sailing, bird watching, and spending time with

family and friends. Some responses noted how the waters have changed; for example, comments on how the water is now too choppy and polluted. However, many responders used the word “pleasure” to describe boating.

#### **E. General Conclusions from Public Input**

Based on all of the public input received on the website, survey and at public meetings, it is safe to draw a few general conclusions. First, water quality is of concern to most people who participated, but the perception of quality is largely based on geography and how people are using the system. Water quality is most often associated with water clarity, even though biologically, clarity does not necessarily indicate a healthy ecosystem.

It is safe to conclude that the public respondents feel that the top three issues in the waterways are algae blooms, polluted runoff (from all sources), and invasive species. Generally speaking, people responded very clearly through all input options that more education and outreach is needed to address those issues at their sources. Participants recognize that these issues do not stand alone; that they are all connected, and that they all relate to water quality. Further, survey respondents clearly thought that monitoring water quality is a priority. Participants at the public meetings and on the website clearly communicated that a lack of enforcement is a big issue; many reported not knowing how or to whom they can report issues that they witness.

While non-water recreation, business and tourism did not come out high on the rankings through the survey and the second round of public meetings, these issues were discussed at the first round of public meetings and on the website in fair detail. Many feel a lack of business variety, lack of entertainment or restaurants at which to dock their boats and a lack of a connected trail system. Some conversation at the first round of public meetings supported developing a regional promotion or marketing plan.

Perhaps the most significant take away from all the public input is the strong support for working more cooperatively to manage the waterways system. People understand that the issues are related and must be approached on a watershed (or ecosystem) basis rather than from an individual, separate jurisdictional basis. The survey, website and public meetings input all showed support, and almost need, for more coordination. One caveat heard loud and clear at the public meetings, however, was this coordination should not come at the expense of more rules or a complicated permit system; it should truly focus on simplifying processes where appropriate.

## VII. Next Steps and Recommendations

The Steering Team plans to use the information and input gathered during Phase I to inform future phases of the project. The Steering Team will continue to work together to identify potential sources of future funding and to determine the next steps in the process. Biodiversity Project has identified several potential opportunities or next steps, based upon ideas and input from the Steering Team as well as the public feedback noted in this report.

### **Project and Process Recommendations:**

- **Develop Communications and Outreach Strategy**  
Biodiversity Project recommends that, once next steps for the project are all defined, the Steering Team commission appropriate messaging and outreach. Now that the public is engaged, it is imperative to keep the public momentum going. Transitioning the public message will be important as project progress evolves, to ensure all stakeholders are appropriately informed along the way.
- **Communicate Consistently with the Public**  
The Steering Team should continue to clearly communicate with the public about project status, any issues currently being addressed, and how they plan to address other priorities. This may require a targeted messaging campaign to inform the public that their input was heard, and that certain issues and solutions are currently being addressed. A campaign name (Weigh in on the Winnebago Waterways) is in place, giving the project initial recognition throughout the five counties, and a communications structure has been built. The Steering Team should review, and revise accordingly, the pathways of communications in place to ensure targeted audiences are included and continue to be reached.
- **Engage Local Municipalities**  
The Steering Team should engage with local municipalities immediately. The public is currently engaged and momentum was strong at the time this report was written. The Steering Team has a timely opportunity to research collaboration efforts and to discuss project opportunities with local jurisdictions. Together, these jurisdictions should try to identify redundancies in code, policy or permitting, and areas where waterways management coordination can be enhanced. The results of this study can also help local governments see the areas where they could improve communication, access to information, outreach and education to clarify or correct misperceptions about lake issues and management responsibilities.
- **Engage Community Representatives**  
The Steering Team should also begin a planning effort to engage local, private and nonprofit champions on the next project phases. Consider the enthusiasm and participation of the Stakeholder Advisory Team and continue to engage those members and their networks.
- **Define Cooperative Management**  
Now that public support for cooperative management has been noted, the Steering Team must define exactly what that means or *could* mean. The Steering Team should research potential management areas approaches that have been used for large, multi-jurisdictional, public resources, and determine how they might apply to the Winnebago Waterways and gauge public support for such options accordingly.

- **Conduct Public Polling About Solutions and Funding Structure**  
Public input indicates that most people feel that education, outreach and monitoring activities would be a good starting point for working together. The Steering Team would benefit from additional polling of the public on more specific ways in which to work cooperatively. Further, the Steering Team should also research potential funding sources and structure(s) for implementing cooperative management, then conduct further public polling to determine support for the options.
- **Consider and Respond to Public Opinions and Ideas**  
The Steering Team should consider the comments and all of the priorities identified through the public engagement process and conduct an analysis of any issues that are already being addressed, as well as which issues and solutions are less intensive and could be addressed in the immediate or near future. The Steering Team should consider, specifically, researching or developing better coordinated education, outreach and monitoring programs. Such activities would have multiple benefits, including engaging the public in new ways and providing a role for more organizations and individuals. The monitoring activity could also provide more information with which to measure conditions and trends on the lakes. In addition, now that the public has expressed concerns, they will want to hear back from decision-makers about progress. Since some of their identified concerns are already being addressed, this is a great opportunity for decision-makers to showcase progress. The Steering Team should determine whether additional data points or public input are needed to be able to address the priority issues. For example, this phase collected information about the addresses and age of participants that could be used to address under-represented communities and groups (e.g. people ages 14-35 make up about one-third of the population in the region, but were only about 12% of the participants).

#### **Steering Team Operations Recommendations:**

- **Continue and Strengthen Steering Team and Assign Roles**  
The Steering Team should continue to meet at least once per month to keep project momentum going, continue assigning roles and maintain a chart of progress; Biodiversity Project recommends maintaining a neutral facilitator to assist with documentation and keeping the process democratic and transparent. The Steering Team currently consists of 25 members, 19 of whom were consistently active throughout Phase I by attending monthly meetings and conference calls, providing input and feedback, participating in outreach efforts and promoting projects. Biodiversity Project recommends further solidifying the Steering Team going forward, and assigning specific roles to all members to ensure progress is documented and communication is consistent among the team.
- **Develop Communications and Outreach Strategy**  
Biodiversity Project recommends that, once next steps for the project are defined, the Steering Team commission appropriate messaging and outreach planning. Transitioning the public message to reflect new progress will be important as project evolves to ensure all stakeholders are appropriately informed along the way.